

**An Exploration of the Formative Experiences of Grassroots  
Rugby Coaches and their Impact on Coaching Practice:**

**A Bourdieusian Analysis**



**A thesis submitted for the degree of Master's by**

**Research (MbR)**

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## **Declaration**

Candidate's declarations:

I, Alan Clark, hereby certify that this thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Science by Research (MbR), Abertay University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This work has not been submitted for any other qualification at any other academic institution.

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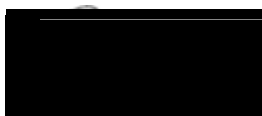


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Supervisor's declaration:

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Certificate of Approval

I certify that this is a true and accurate version of the thesis approved by the examiners, and that all relevant ordinance regulations have been fulfilled.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore the way in which formative experiences of rugby coaches impact on their current practice. Ten coaches took part with a wide range of experience (3 - 32yrs), qualifications (Rugby Right – UKCC L3) and who coached across the age spectrum (U8 – Adult Rugby). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants and these were thematically analysed using Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *capital*. The results of this research identified four themes: 'Role models in early experience'; 'Brought up in a rugby environment'; 'Current rugby culture'; and 'Continued involvement in the game'. The findings of this study suggest the habitus and cultural capital accumulated in their formative years heavily influences their own coaching approach and placement within the coaching field. Further findings suggest a conflict between the coach education offer from Scottish Rugby and the needs of grassroots coaches. There were a number of areas identified for improvement; specifically in coach recruitment and development, with clear expectations required from the governing body. From the findings identified it is suggested further research is conducted to explore coaching within rugby in Scotland.

**Keywords;** Scottish Rugby, Coaching, Bourdieu, Formative Experience, Influences



## **Introduction**

The decision to embark upon this study was informed by my own interest in Rugby in Scotland. Having grown up in what could be termed as Scotland's rugby 'Heartland' and played the game since the age of six I have been immersed in '*rugby culture*' my whole life. My initial experiences in playing rugby came through my local club before I moved on to play through school and finally in adult rugby around the world. Throughout my adult life I have also coached rugby at various levels, from working with adult teams of both sexes, youth rugby with my own son and representative squads. From a professional perspective I have been fortunate to work in sport for my whole working life with coach education and development being a major part in my roles. It is this background of sporting culture, personal experience and coach development which motivated me to carry out this research.

## **Background**

In recent years the idea and value of sports volunteering as a whole and sports coaching in particular has been raised in the public consciousness (Griffiths and Armour 2014). The London Olympic Games in 2012 received 240,000 applications for the 70,000 places available in the Games Maker volunteer programme and there is further data available to suggest there has also been an increase in involvement from those who were already volunteering in sport as a result of the Games (UK Govt 2013). The Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014 reported a similar trend with 50,801 people applying for the 12,500 'Clydesider' volunteer places (Commonwealth Games Federation 2015).

According to Sports Coach UK (SCUK) there are around 1.1 million adult sports coaches working either as a lead or assistant coach in the UK who are estimated to be delivering around 1.68 million hours of coached activity to over 5 million participants per week (SCUK

2013). It is further estimated that 76% of all coaches are currently working in a voluntary capacity in community sport.

### **Coaching within Scottish Rugby**

In common with most sports there are several levels within the game of rugby in Scotland ranging from the elite professional ranks to the grassroots amateur game. There are a corresponding range of coaching opportunities available to coaches along the continuum although in line with the findings from the SCUK (2011) report over three quarters of the 5000 or so coaching positions exist within the voluntary grassroots game (Scottish Rugby 2016). Over the past 30 years there has been a general move towards the professionalisation of coaching in sport with many governing bodies committing significant resource to coach education systems (Lyle and Cushion 2010). Scottish Rugby has developed a programme of formal and informal opportunities to improve the standard of coaching at all levels across the game. However, there is growing evidence to suggest the most valuable form of education and knowledge for coaches is through informal learning (Gilbert and Trudel 1999; Mallet, Trudel, Lyle and Rynne 2009). Further to this, studies have found that both playing experience and coach observation are the two most important factors for the development of coaching knowledge (Gould, Giannini, Krane and Hodge 1990; Salmela, Cote and Baria 1994; Cushion 2001). There would appear, therefore, to be something of a disconnect between the best learning environment for coaches and what Scottish Rugby currently directs resources to. This raises questions about the way in which coach development is currently structured for Rugby in Scotland and the efficacy of the system in continuing the cycle of bringing coaches into the game and improving their practice.

## **Why coach?**

There is a significant body of research related to the reasons coaches carry out their role.

These include, but are not limited to, enjoyment, ambition and financial gain (Potrac, Armour and Jones 2004). However, most, if not all, available studies in this area relate to current coaching practitioners with the focus being placed on what they get out of coaching as an active coach. There appears to be very little regarding the reasons coaches decide to take on a coaching role in the first place and what experiences have influenced the decision to make a transition into coaching. As previously mentioned there is some research linking experience as a player and observation of coaches to coaching knowledge (Gould et al 1990; Salmela et al 1994). Nonetheless, given the size of the coaching workforce and the continued need to recruit new coaches into sport this lack of evidence related to understanding new or potential coaches is surprising.

## **An Outline of the Research**

This research will contribute to the literature on coach development generally and to the link between experience and coaching specifically. There is a gap in the literature relating to the experiences coaches have prior to their involvement in the field and the potential impact these can have on their practice. As a result this study aims to explore the way in which formative experiences of rugby coaches impact on their current practice.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

Sports coaching has become a major leisure pastime in the UK over the past 30 years with an estimated 1.1 million people engaging in at least one session each week (SCUK 2011). As such there has been a significant increase in the research surrounding the field during that time. The following review will examine the available literature with a particular focus on the transition people make into coaching, coach education and development structures and coaching ideologies. There will also be a review of Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of capital, field and habitus as related to sports coaching.

### **Transitions into coaching**

The routes into sports coaching are varied. Since the early 1990s sports coaching courses have proliferated in both secondary and tertiary education as the sector has kept pace with the professionalization agenda within the field of coaching (Lyle & Cushion 2010). Each year up to 50,000 applications are made for the 10,000 places on offer for students to embark on a sports coaching course in the UK with a view to securing employment at the end of their studies. However, of the 1.1 million sports coaches currently working in the UK, only 24% report that they are paid with the remaining 76% doing so in a voluntary capacity (Sports Coach UK 2011). Whilst factors relating to the reasons people decide to take on paid roles in sports coaching, such as financial reward, career aspirations are well documented (Taylor and Garret 2010; Lyle and Cushion 2010) there is very little in the literature relating to the process by which an individual decides to become a voluntary coach. Furthermore, there is very little evidence to suggest what routes voluntary coaches take into their roles. There is a body of research to support the successful transition of ex-athletes into coaching roles into

coaching but this is heavily focussed on the career transitions of higher level athletes into coaching careers (Lavallee 2006; Gordon & Lavallee 2006; Gilbert, Cote & Mallet 2006; Sage 1989). There is also some reference made to parents making the transition into coaching but generally this is mentioned as part of a wider study into either coaching career transitions or athlete progression (Wuerth, Lee & Alfermann 2004; Harwood & Knight 2015). There would, therefore, appear to be a gap in the research into the reasons why individuals embark on a voluntary coaching career. This study aims to shed some light on this question.

### **Coach Education**

As would be expected within a complex field such as coaching, there are a range of structures in place to support coaches scholars generally agree that support mechanisms fall into the 3 broad categories of formal, non-formal and informal coach education (Callery, Werthner and Trudel 2011). However, coaches do not simply manifest themselves as empty vessels at the start of their careers. In the field of voluntary sports coaching, where the vast majority of coaches are either parents, ex-players or both, prior experience and transferable knowledge through the transition to coaching would appear to be an area worthy of further study. In several studies prior experience is highlighted as a significant factor influencing coaching practice, particularly through individuals playing sport themselves and 'learning' coaching practice from their own coaches (Lemyre, Trudel and Durand-Bush 2007; Lavallee 2006). Similarly, research carried out into the transfer of knowledge between fields would suggest a level of expertise in parents working with youth groups (Inkpen and Tsang 2005; Bourdieu 1984). Nonetheless, these studies do not specifically look at formative experience of coaches prior to their transition into coaching.

The development of the coaching workforce within sport has been a major research area for scholars over the past 30 years as the drive to professionalise the field has gathered pace (Cushion, Nelson, Armour, Lyle, Jones, Sandford and O' Callaghan 2010; Cushion, Armour and Jones 2003; Cordery and Davies 2016) . As a result, government agencies and National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs) have invested significant resources into producing and refining coach development structures as outlined below.

### **Formal and Non-Formal Coach Education**

As Lyle and Cushion (2012) suggest, formal coach education has arisen from the increasing move towards professionalism in sport over the past 30 years with coaches gaining qualifications by showing competence across a number of standardised checks (Piggot 2012). In their review of coaching literature Cushion et al. (2010) note that formal coach education can be placed on a sliding continuum between education and indoctrination closer to the indoctrination end of the scale. Further research suggests that this is due to NGBs seeing coaches as attending courses with little prior knowledge, thus being vessels to be filled (Piggot 2012). As Cushion et al. (2010) further note, this approach expects coaches to mimic a 'model coach' by taking on board a standard set of practices. Given the resource committed by NGBs and governmental agencies (Scottish Rugby 2017; Sports Coach UK 2013) and with reference to the literature outlined above regarding professionalism there is little evidence of research supporting the efficacy of formal coach education programmes. In the available studies published to date (Gilbert and Trudel 1999; Nash and Sproule 2012) formal coach education has been found to have limited use. Gilbert and Trudel (1999) found that the subject in their study learned gained little new knowledge on the course whilst Nash and Sproule (2012) found that, although coaches gained some sport specific knowledge, there was little or no impact on their pedagogy. However, Nelson, Cushion and

Potrac's (2013) study into the views of coaching practitioners found although that they felt they gained from formal education opportunities they would place a higher value on course content built around pedagogical approaches to engage learners. This could suggest that perhaps it is the content in formal coach education that is worth considering rather than the concept itself.

As Nash and Sproule (2010) note, there is general criticism of formal coach education from both coaches and scholars alike. There is more evidence suggesting the efficacy of non-formal and informal coach development (Cote 2006; Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald and Cote 2008; Nelson, Cushion and Potrac 2013). Non formal coach development refers to structured coach development opportunities in the same way as formal coach development, however, in the case of non-formal coach development there is no accreditation and opportunities take place as workshops, clinics or seminars (Maclean and Lorimer 2016). As with formal coach education, non-formal coach education is a product of the professionalization of sport (Lyle and Cushion 2012). However, due to its non-accredited nature opportunities exist in a wide range of areas such as the Positive Coaching Scotland programme (Scottish Rugby 2017) and the Coaching Connect and Talent series (sportscotland 2017). There are, nonetheless, conflicting views in the literature as to the effectiveness of non-formal coach development. This could be due to the general grouping of non-formal opportunities under the heading of 'coaching courses' (Nelson, Cushion and Potrac 2006).

### **Informal Coach Education**

There is a growing body of evidence within the literature to suggest informal coach education is the most valuable area of coach development to coaches as it relates to their

own experience (Cote et al. 2008; Gilbert and Trudel 1999; Mallet, Trudel Lyle and Rhyne 2009). To gain an understanding of the field it is useful to refer to the wider literature and, in particular, the widely cited work of Coombes and Ahmed (1974) who describe informal learning as, *'the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment'* (p 8). Informal learning is therefore a process which takes place continuously in relation to a number of environmental or societal factors. From a sports coaching perspective the evidence suggests coaches learn through a number of informal routes including: previous experience as a player; mentoring; on the job experience; and interaction with other coaches (Nelson, Cushion and Potrac 2006; Cushion et al. 2003). However, as discussed earlier, there is very little research relating to the transfer of habits learned in early experience into the field coaching. There is evidence to suggest informal learning opportunities provided to volunteer rugby coaches in the form of observing other coaches, receiving support from a mentor and learning by coaching are more valued than formal and non-formal methods (North 2010). However, an assumption is made in some studies that new coaches will have the opportunity to work under and learn from more experienced coaches with little to support the common experience of new coaches in community club settings who do not have a more experienced coach to work alongside (see Cushion et al. 2003). In this situation coaches are forced to rely upon their own experiences and any transferable skills they may have (Nelson et al. 2006). Furthermore, for most coaches coming into the field for the first time it is unlikely that they will have had the opportunity to undertake any organised coach education. It is this reliance on formative experience in addition to further coach education opportunities that is of particular interest to this study.



## Experience

Cushion et al. (2003) suggest that, in addition to what they term the 'usual subjects' of coach education, namely content knowledge, we must look into the wider field of coaches' experience in order to develop better coaches and avoid replicating the same system. In a number of studies playing experience and observation of other coaches have been identified as the most important factors for the development of coaches (Gould, Giannini, Krane and Hodge 1990; Salmela, Cote and Baria 1994; Cushion 2001) with others suggesting that the time spent in coach education in comparison to experience and observation make the former far less impactful than the latter (Rossi and Cassidy 1999). As noted above, playing experience and the chance to observe coaches are initial sources of coaching knowledge, allowing for a period of learning through observation to enable them to become familiar with both the task of coaching and the collective understandings and culture of coaching. It is this process of enculturation that allows for coaching behaviours to be passed on (Cushion et al. 2003). Furthermore, these formative experiences in coaching continue to influence perspectives and behaviours well into coaches' careers (Cushion et al. 2003; Nelson, Cushion and Potrac 2006), with the result that the majority of coaching practice is rooted in the way in which coaches interpret formative experiences (Cushion et al. 2003).

The influence of experience in coaching practice then raises the question of 'who is coaching?' (Jones, Bailey, Santos and Edwards 2012). This question can be asked both in the setting of the current coach's practice and in the practice of the coaches the contemporary coach has observed throughout their sporting history. It is, therefore, important to understand the dispositions of coaches, the way in which they act in response to social and

cultural influence, in order to gain a better understanding of their reasons for coaching (Laberge and Kay 2002).

### **Bourdieu in Sports Coaching**

In assessing the way in which practice is informed by experience within a social setting such as sports coaching the concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* as outlined by Bourdieu (1984) stand out as appropriate mechanisms. As previously discussed experience and observation are seen as the two most important factors in coaching knowledge (Cushion 2001). The following section will examine each concept in relation to the formative experience of coaches and the impact on their current practice.

#### **Field**

Bourdieu's (1984) construct of 'field' can be described as a space existing within society within which capital and habitus enact. For example, Kitchin and Howe (2016), in their analogy of a professional sports league, describe the field as the '*setting*' (p124) within which the league takes place and where individuals struggle for resources. In this study the *field* is taken as 'rugby coaching'. Further *fields* could be considered as 'rugby', 'sports coaching' or 'sport' as a whole but in order to derive some clarity of discussion 'rugby coaching' will be considered as the *field* throughout the study. As Tomlinson (2004) further outlines a field is a network of relations between positions. There is, therefore, an element of 'struggle' within each field as power (capital) is exerted by the individuals within it. This struggle is highlighted by Kitchin and Howe (2016) in their example of teams competing with each other within a professional league but also at times with the league itself. The struggle for resources within the *field* of rugby coaching is also determined by the actors within it. In this study these are the coaches themselves, the clubs or teams and the NGB, in this case

Scottish Rugby. The *field* of rugby coaching within this study can be seen as valid as there are elements of struggle both within and between each of these actors. For example, coaches may vie for position with other coaches within their own club but also with coaches from another club or clubs may conflict ideologically with the NGB in relation to formal coach education structures.

### **Habitus**

Habitus can be described as the way in which an individual experiences life from a given point of view (Applerouth and Edles 2010). This viewpoint is informed by '*...lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalisation of constraints and possibilities.*' (Wacquant 1998, p6). In other words, it describes a social space within which an individual experiences life encompassing beliefs, understandings and social rules (Applerouth and Edles 2011). Bourdieu and Nice (1980) refer to habitus as '*durable and transposable*' (p53). By this they are referring to the notion that habitus is something an individual takes with them through all activities, whether that is sports coaching, work or socialising. In this way individuals often gravitate towards people with a shared habitus (Bourdieu 1990), thus sticking to "their kind of people", those with whom there is considerable overlap in terms of their position in a social space, for example, tastes in music, cultural activity, vocabulary, political views and participation in sports (Applerouth and Edles 2010). Lifestyle choices are, therefore, highly influenced by the habitus (Bourdieu 1984). From a sporting perspective this would mean that there is a 'code' which is necessary to be able to truly be part of any activity. Without this understanding those who do not take part have little interest in doing so. Kitchen and Howe (2016) present habitus as a '*practical sense*' (p 124) in their analogy of a sports league, the way in which those participating in the league understand it and are disposed towards it.

It is worth noting at this point that Bourdieu (1984) suggests that habitus exists in both the individual, through his or her own internal set of beliefs, understanding and rules, and in the field, through the shared dispositions of the group or activity. There is, therefore, an ontological complicity between the personal habitus and the habitus that exists within the field. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe this as the point where an individual with a certain habitus encounters a field with a similar habitus. There is, in this case, a high degree of ontological complicity which, in turn, allows the individual to better integrate within the field.

From the perspective of voluntary rugby coaching the concept of habitus allows us an insight into the previously discussed development of coaching knowledge through formative experience. That habitus is developed as a result of an individual's experience through interactions within a certain social space is of potential use to coach development (Cushion et al. 2003). Coaches, through their own experience in watching coaches or being coached, develop a personal habitus and are drawn to people like them in their coaching, thus maintaining the habitus (Applerouth and Edles 2010). From a coach education standpoint this can be both useful and problematic in that good coaching practice is passed on in the same way as poor coaching practice is (Gilbert and Trudel 2001). This is concurrent with the findings of Taylor and Garratt (2010) that although NGBs expected coaches to follow the agenda of professionalization through the standards delivered across coaching qualifications this did not necessarily suit those at grassroots, thereby creating tension between the agents involved.

### **Capital**

Put simply, capital can be described as the value an individual or social network brings to a

situation. Bourdieu (1986) describes the three forms of capital as economic, cultural and social although other forms of capital have also been outlined (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1994). Economic capital describes that which one can materially possess such as money, cars and homes; cultural capital, educational attainment, knowledge, expertise and aesthetic preferences; and social capital, networks and connections individuals and groups have. Due to the nature of this study and the focus on experience and learning the following section will concern itself primarily with cultural capital.

In sport and sports coaching the notion of capital is as prevalent as in any other area of society with coaches bringing different levels and forms of capital to the sport they are involved. Thus a hierarchical structure is created (Jones et al. 2011). For example, a coach who has played at a high level of sport might be placed higher further up the hierarchy as a result of the capital they have derived from their own prestige and accomplishment in the game (Jones et al. 2011). In relation to the available literature there are a number of recent studies into the notion of capital in sport (eg, see Cushion and Jones 2014; Darcy, Maxwell, Edwards, Onyx and Sherker 2014; Peachey, Borland, Lobpries and Cohen 2015; Widdop, Cutts and Jarvie 2016; Whittaker and Holland-Smith 2016). However, these focus on only one of economic, cultural or social capital. Tomlinson (2004) discusses the way in which all 3 types of capital are interdependent in sport, using the elite and exclusive clubs present in golf and cricket as examples. However, this study aims to focus on volunteer coaches in rugby from the working to middle classes in open clubs. This study will further examine the relationship that the acquisition of cultural capital in formative experience has on the reasons people coach, where they coach and their coaching practice.

## **Relational analysis**

Bourdieu (1984) suggests that the field, habitus and capital are distinct but interrelated, each having an impact on the others. For example, a change in capital will impact upon the habitus as differing power values will affect the actions of the players. This in turn would lead to a change in the field. This is highlighted in the literature in several studies. Kay and Laberge (2002a,b) undertook 2 studies to show a vertical relationship between field, habitus and capital in the sport of adventure racing. In both studies they noted that changes in the habitus could be attributed to changes at the meso, macro and micro levels in the sport. For example, a change in the overall participants from distance athletes with high levels of physical capital to predominantly middle class males with high levels of economic capital will have the effect, through the percentage of participants alone, of changing the habitus. In turn this may also change the field itself from a competition based to a participation based environment (Kay and Laberge 2002a,b). Thus, a relational analysis using the concepts of capital, habitus and field can be used to illuminate how sporting organisations can change. Kitchen and Howe (2013) in discussing their professional league analogy and its implications for future sport management research suggest the following: Macro analysis relates to the field such as organisational policy; meso relates to the habitus, the values and organisational phenomena; and micro to the types of capital and strategies used to increase capital.

## **Why and how coaches coach**

As this study will use the Bourdieu's concepts of *field, habitus and capital* as an overarching framework for discussion the following sections will draw upon these concepts in relation to

the available literature. In particular there will be an examination of the factors influencing coaches in their careers and of the differing ideologies rugby coaches operate within.

### **Teachers as coaches**

Rugby in Scotland at youth levels is currently played at both Clubs and Schools (Scottish Rugby 2017). However, until the decline in school rugby in the mid to late 1970s youth rugby was played almost exclusively in schools and coached by school teachers in an extra-curricular capacity (Scottish Rugby 2017). This change from an analogue system in youth rugby to a dual approach now means that rugby is being delivered by both professionals (teachers) and amateurs (club coaches). Given that most community coaches are parents and school rugby is delivered primarily by teachers it is unsurprising that the habitus within the field of youth rugby tends to follow amateurist ideals for the most part (Carpenter and Day 2015; Allison 2011). Indeed, Busser and Carruthers' (2010) study into volunteer coach motivations in youth sport found that values and social factors to be the most important functions for youth sport coaches. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that the trend towards professionalism and the pressure to win in school sport for teacher – coaches and the role conflict emerging from the differing habitus required as a teacher in the curriculum and a coach being required to win is having an impact on the habitus of the individual (Gearity 2010; Richards and Templin 2012). In short, the individual is required to adopt a certain habitus according to the field he or she is working within.

### **Sport socialization**

There is little recent evidence relating to the socializing role of school sport although in the past scholars have noted the phenomenon of 'enculturation' - the process by which people learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire values and behaviours

appropriate or necessary in that culture - as a product of scholastic sport although there are parallels drawn between the habitus of the teacher / coach and the future behaviour of the participant (Greendorfer and Lewko 1978; Schafer 1974). Bourdieu (1984) explains this as 'cultural reproduction', the process by which capital and a particular personal habitus is transferred from generation to generation. Although there are a number of studies pertaining to cultural reproduction in sport (eg. Cushion and Jones 2014; Tomlinson 2004), there has been little research to date relating to the reproduction of habitus from participation to coaching. More recent research has primarily focused on the roles of parents and peers in sport socialization rather than coaches or teachers (Fredericks and Eccles 2004; Edwardson and Gorely 2010; Beets, Cardinal and Alderman 2010).

### **Early experience**

There is evidence that childhood socialisation is extremely influential as it informs all future experiences (Applerouth and Edles 2010). As Perks (2007) notes, there is also a significant body of research to suggest that people who are involved in extra-curricular activities when they are young are more likely to become involved in voluntary adult participation. Reasons for this are generally explained in a number of ways; as a result of the accumulation of skills and habits acquired earlier in life (Putnam 2000); the increased opportunities to develop life skills and competencies afforded by extracurricular activities (Eccles and Barbour 1999); or the development of civic character through participation (Youniss, McLellan and Yates 1997). Similarly Zaff, Moore, Papillo and Williams (2003) draw a link between extracurricular participation and civic involvement for young adults, however this study is limited to a period 2 years immediately after graduation from school. It does, nonetheless, highlight some transference of capital and habitus into adulthood. As Perks (2007) goes on to describe, however, the research pertaining specifically to youth sports participation, its



impact on adult sports volunteering and the habitus of those participating is unclear. Of the body of work in the literature sport as an extracurricular activity is either not included in the data or is included as part of an aggregate measure of extracurricular activities such as community service, religious participation or student government (Perks 2007). Of those studies focussing on participation in sport as an indicator for adult participation the main area of study has been in adult sport participation, not volunteering (eg, Curtis McTeer and White 1999). Whilst there is some evidence suggesting that youth sport participation is a strong predictor of adult community volunteering (Perks 2007), again this is an aggregate measure within which adult sport volunteering was not specifically measured. As previously discussed there would appear to be a strong link between coaching knowledge and formative experience in playing sport (Gould, Giannini, Krane and Hodge 1990; Salmela, Cote and Baria 1994; Cushion 2001), however, the link between the habitus in the field of sports participation and that of coaching practice is less evident in the literature.

### **Coach recruitment**

According to SCUUK (2011) the vast majority of coaches in the UK are recruited into school and community sport and, as discussed previously, amateurism and voluntarism are the dominant ideologies in those fields. It is, therefore, important to look at the body of research discussing the area of coach recruitment when undertaking a study such as this. A search of the literature reveals that there is very little relating to coach recruitment in school and community sport. Due to recent major events in the UK such as the London 2012 Olympics and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games there are a significant number of recent studies relating to volunteer recruitment (eg, see Auld, Cuskelly and Harrington 2009; Nichols and Ralston 2011; Dickson and Benson 2014). However, these studies relate not to

coaching at community clubs but to event volunteers. Similarly, there are a number of recent studies related to volunteer recruitment in a community or community sport setting (eg, see Østerland 2013; Cuskelly 2016; Schlesinger and Nagel 2013), although these, again, relate to aggregate measures of volunteering as a whole and do not isolate coaching in particular. There is some evidence to suggest recruitment is an area of strategic development for Scottish Rugby (2017) as part of their volunteer recruitment guide although this is not specifically related to coaching. Furthermore there would appear to be no research in the field of coach recruitment with regard to the habitus or capital required in the field.

### **Coaching ideologies**

Within the literature that there are three clear but interlinked ideologies relevant to this study: Amateurism, which has its roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century English public school system; Voluntarism, which, although closely linked to the ideal of amateurism, can be seen as having relevance out with the sporting world; and professionalism, the drive to develop both a vocational and accredited structure in coaching (Taylor and Garret 2010). Ideologies can be defined as According to Bourdieu (1990) the formation of sets of ethics and relations amongst people inform the habitus which helps to create ideologies. Correspondingly it is important to understand the various ideologies in place in sport coaching in order to gain a better understanding of the habitus coaches have and the overall habitus of the field (Fernandez-Balboa and Muros 2006).

### **Amateurism**

Day, Carter and Carpenter (2013) argue that coaching is shaped by wider social and cultural contexts as part of a cultural heritage. This being the case it is important to understand the

dominant ethos present in British sport over the majority of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; amateurism (Gruneau 2006, Holt and Mason 2000). As the prevalent philosophy in the early years of British sport amateurism has shaped the cultural heritage of sports coaching (Dunning and Sheard 2005). Indeed, Allison (2001) describes it as an hegemony controlling the development of modern sport in the United Kingdom. The word amateurism itself originates from the French *amateur* meaning someone who has a love of something and participates in that activity as a matter of taste. *Amateurism*, however, refers to an ideology or set of beliefs. As has been previously discussed ideology has strong connections with Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

The roots of amateurism lie in the British class system (Gruneau 2006, Day et al. 2013). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the public school system began to formalise the rules governing a number of sports including rugby, football and cricket (Day and Carpenter 2015). This formalisation allowed for the development of these games between public schools and also for the development of the concept of amateurism (Carter 2014). As Baker (2009) notes, scholars generally agree on the key features of the ideology: (1) the game is important, not the outcome; (2) training to compete is frowned upon; (3) the team performance supersedes the individual; (4) lose well and win well; (5) respect the opponent; (6) play with style but don't show off; (7) sport is for the participant, not an audience; (8) and the all-round athlete is more valuable than the specialist. Gruneau (2006) further notes that middle class advocates saw sport as a civilising pursuit, enabling the development of self-reliance, modesty, a sense of fairness and respect for opponents. The appeal of amateurism as part of a social and cultural movement was an area of debate and interest. Those advocating amateurism for all believed by using sport a higher social and cultural

purpose could be served meaning the ideology of amateurism could be used to 'civilise' the masses (Baker 2004; Gruneau 2006). However, Day and Carpenter (2015) argue that within the middle classes the idea of the '*Gentleman Amateur*' began to rise. Education had become the main marker of a gentleman, allowing for the middle and upper classes to play sport together, excluding the working class. This amateur status became the prevailing habitus across associations who treated any person with professional motives with contempt (Day and Carpenter 2015). In this sense we see the emergence of an ontological complicity between the habitus of a gentleman and the ideology of amateurism in his sporting pursuits.

As sport became more formalised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, associations or National Governing Bodies (NGBs) arose to govern each individual sport. Those formalising sport and incorporating the NGBs being persons who had enjoyed a public (private in Scotland) school education themselves and held dear the values of amateurism (Day and Carpenter 2015). Subsequently NGBs espoused amateurism as a core ideology in the UK and, as a result of the aristocratic origins of the Olympic movement and Britain's acknowledged status as the birthplace of organised sport, the rest of the world.

From its earliest years rugby was seen as a character forming game, guided by the principles of amateurism. As such, suggests Collins (2010), there was no need for coaching, boys played the game to develop morals, structured practice to improve in the game under the instruction of a coach was, therefore, not required. In Scotland, Loretto Headmaster HH Almond argued '*if boys and men live as they should do, and keep constantly in good condition, they do not require training of any kind*'. (Collins 2010 p105)

However, in a number of areas, most notably the north and south west of England where rugby had been embraced across class boundaries, preparation to win matches and coaching was commonplace (Collins 2010). This led to a conflict of ideology and clash of habitus within the field of rugby between the sport's governing body, the RFU, which believed deeply in the primacy of amateurism, and the northern clubs, eventually culminating in the 1895 split which created the sport of Rugby League (Collins 2010). This juxtaposition between the central tenets of amateurism and the improvements in playing the game offered by coaching has gone on to define rugby over the past 120 years and can be seen as an example of a lack of ontological complicity, in essence a clash between the habitus in differing fields (Bourdieu 1986).

As Collins (2010) notes, although countries such as Australia and New Zealand had seen and advocated coaches as a key element in success on the rugby field since before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War it wasn't until the 1970s that the increased popularity of the game in the UK brought about by television exposure that coaching started to emerge as a recognised part of the game (O'Brien and Slack 2003). However, such was the habitus throughout the game in the UK that it took until 1995 for the sport to become fully professional and for coaching at the highest level to finally cast off the last vestiges of amateurism (Collins 2010). This is not the case, notes Gruneau (2006), for community sport and schools for which sport has a higher social and moral purpose.

As this study is concerned with volunteer coaches in Scottish Rugby clubs it is important to explore the habitus within youth and community sports organisations. Given that most school and community sport is amateur by nature, there is scarce reference to amateurism in present day youth and community sport. However, there are a number of recent

publications concerning the development of 'life skills' in youth sport. Given the ideological stance of amateurism we can draw parallels from one to the other. Trottier and Robitaille (2014) found that High School sports coaches saw their two main motivations as athlete needs and their own values, suggesting value coaching was strong in that group. Similarly, there is evidence that youth sport coaches can facilitate the development of life skills (Camire, Trudel and Forneris (2012). Of particular interest is the finding that coaches discussed parenthood as a significant experience in coaching development skills. However, Turnnidge, Cote and Hancock (2014) suggest there is a lack of evidence to suggest value driven coaching transfers into other areas of young people's lives such as school or work. Bailey, Armour, Kirk, Jess, Pickup and Sandford (2006) suggest that Physical Education and School Sport have been linked to a number of social factors including improvements in self-confidence and esteem, tolerance, respect, social cohesion and cooperation. This aligns closely with the features of amateurism as discussed above. From a coaching perspective the wider social and cultural purpose served by amateurism, particularly in school and community settings, also allow for the development of the person holistically, something which has traditionally been at the heart of teaching pedagogy and is increasingly influencing the coaching domain (Jones 2007).

### **Professionalism**

The ideology of professionalism sets the outcome above everything else, training and competing to win are the most important thing (Christiansen 2009). There is some suggestion in the literature that the ideals of professionalism simply mean professional paid sport (see Garraway, Lee, Hutton, Russel and MacLeod 2000; Christiansen 2009). However, others suggest that just as amateurism is viewed as more than non-paid sport, professionalism should be viewed as more than paid sport, the key difference between

ideologies being the outcome (Taylor and Garret 2010; Cordery and Davies 2016). There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that professionalism has become the dominant ideology in UK sport over the past 25 years (eg, see Lyle and Cushion 2010; Day and Carpenter 2015; Gruneau 2006). An increase in international competition and commercial forces in sport have driven a steady decline in the ideals of amateurism as the requirement to compete has risen in high level sport (Day and Carpenter 2015).

In conjunction with the advent of National Lottery funding in the UK in 1995 the development of professional coaching systems and coaching as a field in its own right has accelerated rapidly, with the result being that most major NGBs, including Scottish Rugby, now have highly professionalised coaching and education strategies (Sports Coach UK 2013; Scottish Rugby 2017). This would suggest that the habitus within the field is driving an ideology of professionalism. The result has been the formulation of coaching pathways upon which coaches can now place themselves with a view to improving the standard of their own coaching and the level at which they are coaching (Lyle and Cushion 2010). Due to the growth of professional sport some, including Scottish Rugby (Scottish Rugby 2016), argue that the most aspirational coaches can also pursue a career in the game with the most successful working at the elite level (Jones et al. 2011). However, there would appear to be very little evidence to suggest this is possible. Furthermore, as Taylor and Garret (2010) suggest, the evolution of 'professional' standards in coaching required by increased funding and profile has produced a duality in coaching due to the nature of that funding. A coach must have professionally recognised qualifications and must also serve a moral purpose in the promotion and development of social capital. In this way it is possible to see elements of both professionalism and amateurism being highlighted through the process of

professionalization (Cordery and Davies 2016). This apparent clash in habitus within the field once again raises questions about the overall efficacy of the current coach education process and the general understanding of the capital and habitus of the field from all parties.

### **Voluntarism**

Voluntarism as an ideology can be explained as the willingness to give time and resource to an organisation, either for the benefit of the volunteer or for the individual (Janoski and Wilson 1995). Voluntarism has long been connected to amateurism with Baker (2004) suggesting it is one of the key principles in amateur sport administration. Further to this Allison (2011) argues that amateurism is essential to preserving a voluntary sector in society in order to, in sport at least, constrain and moderate commercialism and professionalism by its values. There is relatively little evidence in the literature relating to the values currently present in the voluntary sport sector although both Allison (2011) and Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) have looked into the reasons why people volunteer in sports organisations. As Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) state there is a conflict within the very idea of voluntary practice within leisure time. Put simply, volunteering is an altruistic pursuit, that of giving willingly of one's time to help others whilst leisure time is generally free from obligation and self-serving. There is a need to understand volunteer motivations in taking up and continuing coaching sport. However, the literature is scarce when it comes to motivations for sports volunteers in sports club settings. Instead there is a focus on sports volunteering at major events (Bang, Alexandris and Ross 2008; Peachey, Bruening, Lyras, Cohen and Cunningham 2015). One area of research relating to sports volunteering is in the links to capital. Kay and Bradbury (2008) suggest that volunteering in community sport increases social capital and gives a higher level of connectedness for the participants whilst



Engstrom (2008) draws a clear link between the accumulation of capital and a 'sports habitus' to participation in sport later in life. However, others (see Stemple 2005, Whittaker and Holland-Smith 2016) warn of the ability of capital to enable barriers to participation through race, class and economic lines.

As this study is primarily concerned with the experiences of voluntary sports coaches it is important to understand the landscape within which they are working. Sports clubs in the UK rely heavily on the work of volunteers to both administer and coach. According to Sports Coach UK (SCUK) there are around 1.1 million adult sports coaches working either as a lead or assistant coach in the UK supported by an army of administrators (SCUK 2011). These sports coaches are estimated to be delivering around 1.68 million hours of coached activity to over 5 million participants per week in a voluntary capacity (SCUK 2013). A habitus promoting voluntarism is, therefore, at the heart of the field of sports coaching in the UK. As Janoski and Thomas (1995) note, people volunteer in organisations to enable outcomes they are unable to realise alone. In the case of sports coaches this can either be for personal gain, such as progressing along a coaching pathway, or for some kind of community gain, such as supporting the development of players. This would appear to be at odds with the 'professionalised' field supported by NGBs.

### **Mixed Ideologies**

The rise of professionalism in sport in the UK following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and the rapid decline of amateurism as the prevailing ideology in NGBs in the 1990s are well documented and give some insight into the world of sports coaching at elite levels today (O'Brien and Slack 2003, Taylor and Garratt 2010, Day and Carpenter 2015). Indeed, scholars have focussed on the decline of amateurism as an ideology in sport in the UK (Collins 2010: Day

and Carpenter 2015; Gruneau 2006). Whilst this shift has undoubtedly enabled Great Britain to compete more effectively on the world stage in the domain of professional sport the values of amateurism can still be seen in a sporting context (Lyle and Cushion 2010). Allison (2011) asserts that the values of amateurism have remained present in the voluntary sports sector and as Jones (2010) points out, sport takes place across a variety of different and fluid contexts, organisations and fields. Sport is, therefore, messy, personal experience and circumstance informs even the elite professional with social factors informing practice as much as technical models and procedures (Armour, Jones and Potrac 2005). This allows the opportunity for elements of amateur or voluntary ideals to mix with those thought to be more professional. It is also worthy of note that many of the ideals of amateurism and voluntarism can be found in the way the world's most successful professional rugby team, New Zealand, conduct themselves. Notions of loving the game, playing for enjoyment, respecting opponents and the referee and, above all, humility are all present but the over-riding goal is to win (Kerr 2013; Hodge, Henry and Smith 2014). Far from being the exception, it would appear that this mixed ideological approach is the norm for sports coaches (Jones et al. 2010). Therefore, it would seem logical not to examine fixed ideologies but to focus on coaching habitus within a field in this study.

### **The current study**

Sports Coaching and in particular the areas of coach development and coaching practice have emerged as significant fields of academic study over the past 30 years (Lyle and Cushion 2012). However, academic knowledge within the area of transition into coaching is limited to a small sample dealing with the transition of high level athletes, not voluntary community coaches (Lavallee 2006; Gordon & Lavallee 2006; Gilbert, Cote & Mallet 2006;

Sage 1989). This is surprising given that 76% of all coaches volunteer their time (SCUK 2011)

In addition, although a significant amount of research and resource has been committed to the areas of formal and non-formal coach education the notion that experience and observation are the two most significant factors in coach education and knowledge has been suggested in several studies (Gould et al. 1990; Salmela et al. 1994; Cushion 2001).

There is some recognition of the value of formative sporting experience on coaching knowledge within these studies but there appears to be a gap in the research with regard to the impact on future coaching practice of the habitus of formative experience and the corresponding cultural capital coaches accumulate. This study aims, therefore, to provide some insight into the reasons people make the transition into coaching and the impact formative experiences have on their practice. As the study is primarily concerned with experience it will also aim to highlight participant voice (Sparkes and Smith 2014).

## **Method**

### **Research design**

Maxwell (2013) advocates the need to undertake a process of qualitative research design that allows for a degree of flexibility whilst maintaining both the validity and credibility of the study. This study began with a design in that there would be periods of design and development, gathering data, analysis of data and discussion of data. These periods did not, however, follow a linear process. Rather the author made decisions throughout the study to focus on one or other part whilst ensuring the research aims continued to be met. A qualitative research design was also used in order to better understand the opinions and experiences of the participants in the study. As Sparkes and Smith (2014) note, qualitative research enables us to understand experiences, opinions and their attached meanings, helping to make sense of participant's views.

### **Participants**

All levels of Rugby Union in Scotland are governed by the Scottish Rugby Union (Scottish Rugby, 2017). Although a number of clubs across the country have introduced 'micro' rugby for Primary 1 – 3 children, Scottish Rugby supports the development of the game from Primary 4 (Age 8) to adult. All participants in this study were coaching at these levels. Scottish Rugby recognises mini rugby as Primary 4 – 7 (Age 8 - 12), youth rugby as Secondary 1 to Under 18 and adult rugby as over 18.

In order to understand the research question a decision was made to involve a broad range of coaches from across the coaching spectrum in Scotland. Therefore, a range of experience in coaching, individuals with the full range of rugby coaching qualifications, a diverse age

range and a broad span of abilities coached was sought. The recruitment of coaches for this study was based on 3 criteria to ensure some level of association. First, all had to have actively coached Rugby Union in Scotland within the last year. This allowed for the possibility that a coach may decide to step down from their role in the period between agreeing to take part in the study and recording the interview. Second, coaches had to be registered with Scottish Rugby through a member club or school. Third, participants had to have completed the World Rugby 'Rugby Right' (World Rugby 2015) training course. Scottish Rugby requires this from every rugby union coach under their auspices (Scottish Rugby 2017). This final criterion ensured that all participants had some experience of coach education and interaction with Scottish Rugby.

In total there were ten coaches who took part in this study. Some basic information about each coach at the time they were interviewed is presented below. For the purpose of this study each coach is referred to by a pseudonym.

<b>Coach</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years Coaching</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
Craig	38	6	U-11	UKCC L2
John	54	12	Senior	UKCC L2
Andrew	45	4	U-11	UKCC L1
Ray	30	10	School Age	UKCC L2
Gordon	52	14	U-16	UKCC L2
Colin	51	17	Senior	UKCC L3
Stuart	50	12	U-16	UKCC L1
Grant	38	3	U-8	Rugby Right

Iain	42	3	U-13	UKCC L1
Kenny	57	32	Senior	UKCC L3

Figure 1: Participant details

To identify coaches for the study the author initially contacted coaches from his own network. Snowball sampling was then used to recruit further coaches. Once identified, participants were contacted by email with a formal explanation and invite to take part in the study. All coaches invited took part. Formal consent (see Appendix 2) was then obtained prior to each interview.

### **Data Collection**

Through examining relevant literature (Maxwell 2013, Strauss and Corbin 1998) the author made the decision to use a semi-structured interview method to collect data. This allowed an element of informality in the discussion, thereby encouraging participants to express themselves more freely whilst also maintaining some uniformity across participants. The author produced an interview schedule with a list of questions for each interview. The semi-structured element allowed the author the opportunity to retain some level of consistency in each interview whilst still being able to discuss areas of interest in more depth without having to stick rigidly to a list of questions. The method also enabled participants to reveal meanings attached to responses (Sparkes and Smith 2014). Open ended questions were formulated by the author drawing upon the relevant literature and personal experience and these were then grouped into general themes. A pilot interview took place with an UKCC Level 3 coach known to the author to identify whether the guide questions identified were both relevant to the study area and elicited rich enough responses. This pilot interview also

allowed the author to refine his interview technique, listening and questioning skills. As a result some questions were amended and further probing was identified in others (Maxwell 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant at a suitable time in a quiet and comfortable setting. Each interview generally took between 24 and 35 minutes and was recorded using a dictaphone application on an ipad with the interviewee's permission.

Due to the nature of the author's involvement in the sport of rugby and the relationships he had with some of the participants in this study some form of bracketing was required throughout the process. Creswell and Miller (2000, p127) note that researchers should, *'...acknowledge and describe their entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds'*. That is to say although there was informal discussion prior to and following the interview the author did not interject with any of his own views or opinions during the formal semi-structured interview. Although as Maxwell (2013) points out it is extremely difficult to divorce one's own beliefs, views and feelings from an area of study, not least because they may be the reason one made the decision to study it in the first place, the above approach enabled the author to gather largely unbiased data from the participants in this study.

The method allowed the author to employ a biographical research approach to build a 'life story' for each participant based on their interpretations of their own experiences (Atkinson 1998). Discussion did not focus on a particular point in time but rather a broader picture of the events, social interactions and experiences in bringing them to the time at which the interview took place. This approach also allowed the author to adopt a number of

techniques to ensure the life story was as accurate as possible. Participants were given the chance to explore answers they give with the author asking follow up questions. In this way answers were not dismissed as a result of what the interviewee deemed relevant and interviewees had the chance to discuss areas they deemed to be the most important (Dexter 2006). Biographical investigation is a widely used technique in the wider field of social research and has also been used in sports coaching research (Roberts 2002: Lorimer and Holland-Smith 2012). The semi-structured interview also allowed the discussion to range into areas not specifically covered by the interview structure. Where this was the case the interviewer was able to probe for further information or clarification (Patton, 1987).

Participant distress was a further factor to be considered through the approach taken in this study. The 'life story' approach carries the risk that participants may be asked to discuss events that may be or may become uncomfortable for them (Rosenthal 2004). Each was given an information sheet prior to the interview and it was made clear that they could stop the interview at any point should they wish although none did. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that all data would be anonymised. Again, no participant withdrew from the study. A full transcript of the interview was also sent to each participant for approval prior to data analysis.

## **Analysis of Data**

Following each interview the author transcribed each verbatim into individual word documents using transcription software. This process allowed the author to begin the process of an inductive thematic analysis whilst collecting further data. As Maxwell (2013) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) assert, it is preferable that data collection and analysis take place simultaneously. Inductive analysis allows the researcher to undertake the coding



process without trying to fit data into a pre-existing framework and without taking researcher preconceptions into account (Braun and Clarke 2006). Upon completion of the transcription process a line by line thematic analysis was undertaken, essentially identifying chunks of data summarising what each interviewee is saying. This was followed by the identification of general themes and sub-themes (Strauss and Corbin 2003). These themes were then reviewed and organised into central units pertaining to both formative influences and reasons for coaching. Next, these were formalised, reviewed and renamed to clarify the final themes and subthemes. For an illustration of this process please see appendix 5. Further to this the author enlisted the aid of a colleague to both check the transcripts and conduct an analysis of the data. This second analysis allowed the author to check for bias in the initial analysis and helps to increase the validity of the findings (Patton 2005). In taking this thematic approach the author adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step framework from familiarization through transcription, searching for codes, looking for, reviewing and naming themes before finally producing the report.

## **Data Presentation**

Although it would be more common in a study such as this to present the results and discussion together the author took the decision to present them separately. As Sparkes and Smith (2014) note, the crisis of representation that occurred in the 1980s, the way in our writing can inform the content through the inherent interpretive process, meant that to discuss results at the same time may have diluted the participant voice. The findings are, therefore, presented as a realist tale, thus allowing a clearer representation of the participant's views without analytical information (Van Maanen 2011).

## **Data Saturation**

Ongoing analysis of data meant that it became clear that data saturation had occurred after 10 interviews. Sample size is a key factor in discussion data saturation, too large a sample may result in ethical issues arising such as participant time and misuse of funding, whilst too small a sample may result in concerns over validity (Keiffer, Lesaux, Rivera and Francis 2009). In this study it became clear after 7 interviews that no new themes were emerging. A further 3 interviews were then conducted with no further themes emerging so it was concluded that data saturation had been reached (Bowen 2008).

## Results

The data collected can be separated into 4 distinct but potentially related themes as shown in Figure 2 below:

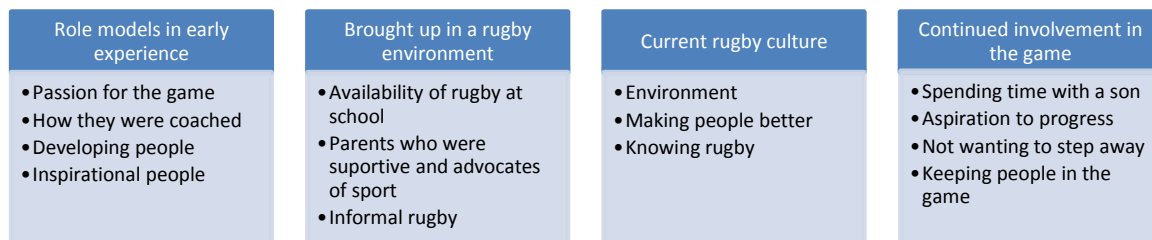


Figure 2: Themes and subthemes

The first two of these themes relate to their own experience in playing the game of rugby whilst growing up. The latter two deal with present day views related to their own coaching and the clubs, schools and teams they are working within.

### Strong role models in early rugby experience

#### *Passion for the game*

Across all interviewees it is very clear from the data that there was at least one person in their formative years who they recognised as having a real passion for the game of rugby or for sport in general.

*[He] ...was that first real Rugby coach, quite old school but had a passion for Rugby and Rugby was then driven in the school. (Andrew)*

*...he was always out in his tracksuit and he was always encouraging people,....So he was one of those people that you respected because he was hard at his sport (Craig)*

*...we used to sit and watch, most nights of the week, watch rugby games and he used to stop and start them and talk through the whole game...he was s enthusiastic obviously about the game and that rubbed off as well. I just found that fascinating... (Gordon)*

*I just think they loved their job and they put the message across the way they wanted to do it which then transfers into us. I think they enjoyed what they done and I think that's what made the difference. (John)*

This influence came either in the form of teachers, family members or a combination of both. In each case interviewees noted and recognised the value these people placed upon the game.

#### *How, not what*

A number of participants also noted *how* these early role models either taught or coached them. It is clear they don't necessarily recall what they were taught as far as the technical and tactical side of the game is concerned. They do, however, remember the way in which they were taught with a definite emphasis on enjoyment and the ethos of the game.

*So I felt that they genuinely cared about me and were connected to me. They may or may not have understood me but they gave the impression they understood me and probably understood what made me tick and what would get the best out of me. (Iain)*

*That's what I remember about people like him, not so much how he coached and what he did but more sort of passion sort of thing for the game. (Gordon)*

#### *Developing people*

A number of those interviewed felt early role models were developing people rather than rugby players. Interviewees saw their early role models as having a wider role in their

development than that of passing on knowledge about rugby. They were instead passing on life skills through the medium of rugby.

*... how[he] used to speak to people that hadn't turned up for a game or to training. Just kind of teaching you life skills basically, kind of core values. (Kenny)*

### *Inspirational people*

Without exception, early coaches or teachers were described as 'inspirational' people through the way in which they both showed a love of the game or sport and the way they conducted themselves. Some noted that they had adopted or tried to adopt similar attributes themselves.

*And then Kenny at the rugby club was just someone that had done so much and everyone seemed to have respect for him and he just had an air about him that you just wanted to, to do your best for him... (Ray)*

*a guy ... who is a bit of legend in Dundee. He was my PE teacher at school and I must admit that some of the things that I do as a coach are things that I remember he did (Kenny)*

## **Brought up in a Rugby Environment**

### *Rugby available at school*

Rugby was a major game in all (n = 10) schools those interviewed attended. This was either through the curriculum, as an extra-curricular activity or both. All cited teachers as their coaches at school.

### *Parents were supportive and advocates of sport*

In all cases (n=10) participants noted their own parents as being either sporty or very supportive of sports involvement. All but 3 had at least one parent with an interest in rugby

with 3 making specific reference to their mother watching them play whilst they were growing up. None of their own parents had had any direct involvement coaching rugby to them. Another smaller group (n =3) also mentioned the level to which family member had played sport themselves.

*Sport was all around the family. My father was very sporty, my grandparents were very sporty, my mum was extremely sporty so, and had a real passion for sport. (Grant)*

*Supportive parents. Especially my mother. I remember her taking me to all the training and standing watching. (Colin)*

*So sport was a big thing. A lot of that's come from my dad. He wasn't a rugby player but he was big on cricket, big on football, liked his golf as well. So it was just that family environment... (John)*

#### *Informal rugby*

A significant proportion of those interviewed (n=8) identified that they had an interest in the game away school. This was either as a spectator with a parent or playing unsupervised with friends or siblings. Those who did not have an informal involvement in the game at an early age (n=2) did not take up the game until after they had gone to secondary school and had parents who, whilst supportive of sport, had no connection to rugby.

*I was always taken down to the rugby club when I was a kid. My dad would go along and watch the firsts and I would go along with him. (Andrew)*

*The pair of us used to go and watch our fathers play. Whether we watched or not is dubious. You spent a lot of time on the side lines kicking and passing the ball about, tackling each other. (Craig)*

*It was probably the 6 Nations...I remember as a kid watching it with my dad because my dad enjoyed it and my mate and his dad enjoyed it so it was something we always watched every year (Stuart)*

## **Rugby Culture**

### *Environment*

This is an extremely important factor for all participants in the study. Reference was made to the 'environment' they are coaching in by every coach (n=10) interviewed. It would appear that an appropriate set of criteria are critical to coaches' involvement in coaching at a certain club or school. This is the case in both their approach to coaching and the reference to the values, ethos and beliefs they expect off the pitch. The data are consistent in highlighting this latter aspect.

*Even building that culture and team spirit up, it's like an identity you've got. You are Dundee Eagles under whatever. We are this group of people that stick together. (Stuart)*

*A lot of people say it but to me it's the sort of game that, to me it's the best team game there is. There's the off pitch side that is so important as well and that's true. (Gordon)*

*The more I'm involved the more the culture of a club is really, really important. Where the right environment, where people enjoy themselves, it's inclusive to all, all level of players so you don't have your cliques, your 1sts and your 2nds, there's a real club environment. (Colin)*

*I don't need to be a head coach, I don't need to be anything, I'll probably just go back and coach. And I'll find a club that I want to go to and the environment's right to go to and be part of. (John)*

#### *Making people better*

All respondents made reference to the fact that they felt their role as a coach was to make people better. This came in two ways, first to improve their players in their ability to play rugby, and second to improve players as people both on and off the pitch. Again, it is evident from the data that this aspect of coaching is highly valued in this group. This latter role was evident across all but one coach (n=9) who was coaching at an independent school.

*You're not just developing a person to play rugby. You're developing a person into discipline, teamwork, enthusiasm, fitness levels, hand eye coordination, social skills. (Andrew)*

*I think, fundamentally, you see the difference it makes to some kids. So we've got a lad in our team who came along to us in primary 6. He's a big lad, I mean he must be twice the size and trice the weight of any other kids and clearly his body doesn't work in the same way, even running's a struggle, and he keeps turning up, keeps turning up and we keep playing him in games and, you know, he struggles but this year he's started to click, there's little things that are happening and his fitness is improving and he's got a pretty tough upbringing. So something like rugby is a brilliant release for him, the discipline, it's given him mates, it's good for his fitness. (Iain)*

*I'm not bothered about winning games. What I'm really bothered about is watching people grow and what I like people doing is saying, 'You can do this, I can do this, I feel better.' I like watching how a team comes together. (Ray)*



### *Knowing rugby*

There is evidence to suggest that having an understanding of the rugby environment is a contributing factor to taking the first steps into coaching. Several of those interviewed expressed the opinion that they were able to get involved in coaching their own sons because they either knew the people at the rugby club or had played themselves. This then allowed them to use knowledge they already had when starting off.

*So I think it's far easier if you are used to rugby clubs, have played there, know some of the people. It's probably more difficult for people who are new to the environment to step forward and say is there anything I can do? (Grant)*

*And it's really only over the last year I've taken over some of the things that I said would have put me off but actually once you know folk, because I didn't know folk in the rugby club, once you start to get to know people it becomes easier and not so much of a big thing as I thought it might be. (Iain)*

*So playing the game definitely influenced my coaching because I don't think if I hadn't played the game...Like if someone said to me now, 'Do you want to come and coach Hockey?' Cricket, I played but if someone said coach Hockey. Well, I've never really played the game so going and trying to coach kids without having the background material...I don't think it would have been something I would have endeavoured to do. (Andrew)*

### **Continued involvement in the game**

#### *Spending time with a son / investing into son's life*

All but 3 of those interviewed (n=7) cited the fact that they wanted to spend time with their own son as being the reason they took up coaching in the first place. Of these coaches all

but one were coaching their own son's age group with the one exception having already followed his son through youth rugby and had returned to coach an U16 age group. This is clearly a major motivating factor in getting involved in coaching in the first instance.

*Initially it was because I wanted to do something with my son and it's that father – son kind of bonding. (Craig)*

*At the moment if I'm honest with you I do it because my son does it and I want to play a part...in his interests. (Iain)*

*Probably because my son was playing. I'm not sure what would happen if he decides he wants to play cricket or do gymnastics. I'm not sure how that would work because you would want to follow your child where that went to. (Stuart)*

*At the beginning it was purely because [my son] played and I enjoyed being part of his life at the beginning. But after 2 or 3 years I just got a buzz out of coaching. I really enjoyed it, I loved planning the sessions, I loved delivering the session, I loved working with the kids, I loved seeing the kids develop. (John)*

It is perhaps interesting to note, however, that the 3 coaches who were not following their sons through age groups were clearly the most aspirational of the group as far as performance coaching is concerned.

*Well at the moment just do the best I can with the team I'm working with and just kinda see where that takes me. I'd love to take them into Premier 1 and get the chance to pit my wits against the best club coaches in Scotland. (Kenny)*

*Head of, it would be a head of rugby position at a better school and running a district team whereas now I'm assistant coaching a district team. That would be the next step. The next step after that would be trying to get involved in the national setup somehow, an age group team and then taking stock from there I think. (Ray)*

#### *Enjoyment / couldn't step away*

There is a clear love of the game for each of the coaches interviewed. It is also clear that all feel they get enjoyment from coaching and would find it difficult to step away from the level of involvement they have. It was common to hear a coach explaining the 'buzz' he got from being involved and how he would miss that feeling if he wasn't able to be involved anymore.

*Why I coach rugby is because it's the closest thing I can get to playing the game and running about and being involved in it. (John)*

*You kind of feel you're still more involved in the game as opposed to completely stepping away from it and just spectating. I'd find it hard to come down and just watch the game, nothing else. (Gordon)*

*...it was quite good .... That wasn't as much fun but it was keeping me part of the rugby club even though I wasn't playing any more. (Colin)*

#### *Giving something back*

A number of coaches noted that they felt a debt to the game they wanted to repay. They felt they had gained from being involved in rugby and wanted to be able to pass that on to the next group of players coming through. This was expressed in general terms, coaches didn't mention they wanted to give back technical and tactical knowledge of the game of rugby but more the experience of being part of the sport.

*It's finding out what they want out of their rugby and then just catering for that. It's not what I want out of rugby, it's what the group of players want. (Colin)*

*...I really enjoy working with young people in particular and passing on knowledge to them and helping them to be better people and that's what I get out of coaching. (Andrew)*

*...I sort of felt a responsibility to pass things on that I knew or had had learned about to players that were...hadn't played as well a level so I could bring them up. (Craig)*

*'Right, OK. If I can influence somebody to some of the factors that I know are in that sport,' later in life the rewards that they'll gain as people will be beneficial to them but will be beneficial and rewarding to me because these kids, some of them might become pro rugby players, some of them might become international rugby players, you don't know that but if you have even a smidgeon of influence on that. Em, but even if they don't take up rugby, if they become decent people you are creating an influence on that, you know what I mean? (Andrew)*

*They just give you 100% and it's really rewarding. (Iain)*

#### *Keeping people in the game*

The idea that it was their role to keep people involved in rugby was expressed by a several of those (n=4) who took part in the study. Although this was less than half of participants is it worthy of note. Coaches noted that they saw themselves as having a key part to play in lifelong rugby participation. This did not mean they necessarily wanted to produce performance or elite level players but more that people are encouraged to play rugby for as long as they can before moving on to coaching or administrative roles within the game.

*It's not about bringing players into rugby that are going to be international players. It's about keeping somebody in rugby for 60 years rather than that, you could be an international and then wrap it. It's about keeping somebody who's...you could go to any club it's the guys that keep playing rugby 'till they're 40 that keep that club going and then turn into committee. So I think that's what the role of a coach is. It's about creating an environment where kids want to stay in rugby. (Colin)*

*I don't see myself stopping. But I see myself changing. So if it's not coaching the team it'll be coaching the coaches. I like coach ed, I like that sort of thing but, you know, I'd like to think that, you know, for the next 3, 4 years I can help build the team that we're building but also build the support network underneath it that they can take that on and grow whatever we're trying to establish. (Kenny)*

## Discussion

The previous section has provided a detailed analysis of the data pertaining to the formative and current experiences in rugby and rugby coaching for each of the participants in this study. This section discusses each of the four themes and related sub-themes (Figure 2) and considers them in the context of previous research in the sociology of coaching. These themes, linked with the central question asking why people coach rugby, will provide the basis for the conclusions reached in the following section. Throughout, the related concepts of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu 1984) are used to inform and frame the discussion. However, in order to do this it is important to first understand these concepts in relation to the areas to be discussed.

Kitchin and Howe (2014) successfully use the example of a professional sports league to help us understand habitus, capital and field in a practical sense. In their study the league and its participants are explained as follows: *capital* is described as ‘*stakes*’ or ‘*tools*’ (p125) with which an individual can gain advantage within the league; *habitus* relates to the ways people operate and the accepted behaviours within the league; and the *field* is the league itself. In this study the author will apply these concepts to voluntary rugby coaching as in Figure 3. The discussion will draw heavily on both the key concepts outlined below and the interconnected nature of capital at a micro level, habitus at the meso and field at the macro level in rugby coaching.

Concept	Definition	Level
Capital	That which a coach brings to the environment from a cultural perspective	Micro

Habitus	The environment, structure and culture as understood by those coaching	Meso
Field	Rugby Coaching	Macro

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Figure 3: The relationship between the master concepts of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1984) and rugby coaching

### **Theme 1: Strong role models in early experience**

Formative experiences were discussed at length with coaches, in particular teachers coaching in an extra-curricular capacity, consistently being mentioned as strong role models and major influences on participants' involvement in rugby. There is some evidence in the literature linking early experience with adult volunteering, although there is very little relating to the relationship between formative experience in sport and voluntary coaching in later life (Perks 2007). The following will attempt to address this issue. Four sub themes emerged from the theme: Passion for the game; How they were coached; Developing people; and Inspirational people.

#### **Subtheme 1: Passion for the game**

All participants in the study noted at least one person in their formative years as having a real love for the game of rugby. As Gruneau (2006) notes, the concept of the game being the most important thing is a key feature of amateurism. It is interesting to note that although participants did mention the outcome of games in their early experience there was no mention at all of it being a concern for coaches. Playing the game, respecting the opponent and developing as individuals was considered to be more central. This would suggest those coaches were very much rooted in an amateurist ideology when it came to their interactions with the participants of this study (Baker 2009). When approaching this

from a Bourdieusian perspective the habitus in participants early experience can be said to have been strongly informed by the ideals of amateurism. Indeed, participants went further when describing the way their coaches felt about the game. It appears that the coaches and teachers in the participants' formative years were passionate about the amateur ideology (habitus) of school rugby at the time.

### **Subtheme 2: How they were coached**

Teachers traditionally take an holistic approach to fulfilling their role, developing cognitive and affective as well as psychomotor domains (Jones 2007). Armour et al. (2005) suggest that, in what we can consider as the *field* of sports coaching, cultural and social factors are as much at play as technical models. Participants in this study referred consistently to *how* they were coached by teachers in their early years with virtually no reference to the technical or tactical information they had received. This suggests coaches were more focused on the interpersonal interactions such as communication skills and teamwork than the content of what was taught. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that participants all highlighted a teacher as a major influence in their formative years in rugby. One participant went as far as to say teachers made good coaches due to the 'skills' they brought to the role. This could, therefore, be seen as a form of capital teachers possess, marking them out as superior to other coaches in the *field* of rugby coaching at the time.

The literature suggests that the professionalization of coach education and development has been the dominant direction of travel over the past 25 years (Day and Carpenter 2015). This has taken place predominantly through the delivery of formal and non-formal opportunities (Callery et al. 2007). However, as is clear from the current coach development literature (Scottish Rugby 2017), there is little to suggest either cultural or social factors are



taken into consideration. From the data we can see that the professional skills most recognised and valued by participants are not necessarily those associated with Coach Education. As Taylor and Garratt (2010) found, this disconnect between the skills of coaches and the requirements of NGBs for coach education can create tension. Given the nature of this study it would appear, therefore, that within the *field* of sports coaching there is relatively long standing area of conflict between those managing and attempting to professionalise the *field* and those coaching at the grassroots. More recent debate in the literature would seem to support this view with scholars calling for coaches to have a greater understanding of the social and cultural aspects of coaching (Cassidy et al. 2015). In this way the *fields* of coaching and teaching would become far more aligned. In addition, although it is not possible to infer from the data in this study, the development of a bona fide sport coaching 'profession' may benefit from such an alignment. Nonetheless, it is clear from this study that the holistic approach to the social and cultural aspects of coaching taken by teachers with participants in the past echoes with the findings of more recent research into coaching pedagogy (Cassidy et al. 2015; Cushion and Partington 2016).

### **Subtheme 3: Developing people**

Participants in the study referred to the way they were developed as people rather than as players. In one of the few studies related to the socialising influence of extracurricular school sport Schafer (1974) notes the role played by teachers in enculturation, the process by which people learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and assimilate to that culture. Although Schafer's study could be seen as dated, the fact that the participants in this study attended school in the 1970s and 80s give it some relevance, particularly given the prevailing ideology of amateurism at the time (Collins 2010). Again, it is clear that the ideals of amateurism were at the forefront of the approach taken by participants' early

coaches with many talking of coaches teaching them '*life skills*' or '*core values*'. This process of enculturation, learning how to act and behave both within the sport and beyond, could be seen as developing the *capital* and understanding of the *habitus* required to function within both rugby and wider *fields*. For example, a player who is coached to develop their ability to work as a team and not focus on results could allow them to better function as a coach at grassroots level because those abilities are highly valued in that environment.

#### **Subtheme 4: Inspiring people**

The inspirational nature of participants' early influencers can be examined by drawing on the concept of *habitus* in that the coach, teacher or parent acted as a conduit to the *field* of rugby. Jones et al. (2012) discuss the nature of the coach, asserting that the 'who' of a coach is equally important as the 'what'. Through the inspirational nature of the coach participants were drawn into the *field* and began to accumulate the *capital* and understanding of the *habitus* required to achieve success. In essence, the process here is one of imitation. It can be argued that participants see a coach as having a large amount of *capital* within the *field* of rugby, a *field* they themselves wish to maintain and build their own *capital* and status in. For example, a player imitating a coach when it comes to congratulating opponents or respecting a referee will gain *capital*, thereby elevating his position within the *field*. Although there is little further evidence within the literature pertaining to the link between inspirational people and the development of capital and understanding of *habitus* within a *field* some parallels can be drawn here with Nelson et al (2006) who suggest coaches learn, amongst other methods, through previous experiences as a player and with the work done by Cushion et al. (2003) with neophyte coaches where they found individuals served and 'apprenticeship' by watching and shadowing more experienced coaches (those with higher levels of cultural *capital* in the *field*).

## **Theme 2: Being brought up in a rugby environment**

This theme specifically explores the extent to which the sport of rugby was present in participants' early years, both at school and at home. Overall, rugby in particular and sport generally were present in some form for each of the participants although there was a mix of formal and informal opportunities present in the data. Nonetheless, it is clear that some exposure to rugby in their formative years is linked to involvement in coaching later in life.

### **Subtheme 1: Availability of rugby at school**

As Day et al. (2013) note, the origins of rugby union lie in the public school system. Consistent with this, each of the participants in this study first experienced rugby at school. However, there was no indication that social class was a factor in rugby provision indicating that by the time the participants in this study attended school rugby provision had extended into the state sector. It is possible to speculate that this was due to the amateur ideology present in the game and its ability to 'civilise' the working classes although further study would be required (Baker 2004). The growing popularity of the game brought about by increased television coverage in the 1970s may also have been a factor in schools promoting the game and its ideology and *habitus*. Nonetheless, due to the fact that school was the only place youth rugby was offered (Scottish Rugby 2017) some discussion into the implications is worthwhile. Although the data set in this study was relatively small it is clear that an exposure to rugby in early life does correlate with an involvement in rugby in the future. As Perks (2007) discusses there is evidence to suggest extra-curricular participation can be linked to volunteer involvement in adulthood and this would seem to support that finding. A further area worthy of discussion is that of the influence of early childhood socialisation in all future experiences (Applerouth and Eddles 2010). It could be suggested that the fact that

all participants experienced rugby at school allowed them to develop the required *capital* to be comfortable within the rugby coaching *habitus*.

However, school rugby was the only avenue for most of the participants in this study and that is no longer the case for players today. For example, young people coming into the game today have a number of entry roots from primary or secondary school to commercial organisations and community rugby clubs (Scottish Rugby 2017). Correspondingly, it is important to note that the overall structure of rugby in Scotland has changed significantly from a system with one point of access (the school) to one where access can be from a variety of sources (e.g., school, club, leisure services) in the present day. Therefore, it would be difficult to say whether availability of rugby at school alone is a predictor of involvement in the game through adulthood. As a result, further study in this area is necessary.

### **Subtheme 2: Parents are supportive and advocates of sport**

Although an earlier subtheme has discussed passion for the game and there is an overlap in some of the points raised, this subtheme is distinct in that it examines the role of the immediate family as influencers. This is slightly removed from the primary involvement of the participants themselves and the coach which has been discussed as an inspiring relationship. Participants in this study all had supportive parents and / or grandparents who were strong advocates of sport themselves. Evidence suggests that the role of the family is a key factor in the sport socialization process (Frederiks and Eccles 2004; Beets et al. 2010; Edwardson and Gorely 2010) and as such it is reasonable to assume family members had a strong contributory effect to the socialization of the participants. Participants, through their families, had a clear understanding of the wider sporting *habitus* and are subsequently more comfortable, by drawing upon early family experience, in sporting environments themselves

(Applerouth and Edles 2010). It is worth noting, however, that although family members were generally supportive of sport, there was not always a particular passion for rugby, more a general support in participants' involvement. Nonetheless, as Beets et al. (2010) note, this social support in terms of enabling, encouraging and spectating promotes and fosters youth involvement in sport.

### **Subtheme 3: Informal rugby**

Acquisition of skills and habits in early life again came through strongly in this subtheme. The majority of participants discussed being part of the rugby 'environment', although discussing an informal setting, either watching the game or in unsupervised play. However, within this setting an understanding of how to behave is being learned with adults making the decision to take their children to take part in rugby events, be that an international match amongst thousands or the local club (Putnam 2000). In this way the study participants were being encultured into the wider *field* of rugby and its *habitus*, the culture, traditions and ideals of the game (Bourdieu 1984). What sets this subtheme apart from others is the informal nature of the engagement with the sport. As Coombes and Ahmed (1974) suggest, informal learning is the process by which knowledge and skills are gathered through being exposed to an environment. It could, therefore, be argued that exposure to informal rugby environments helps individuals to learn about rugby *habitus*. Furthermore, given the contention that the majority of learning will take place in an informal setting (Nelson et al. 2006), it could be argued that engagement with rugby in an informal way in early experience is extremely important in understanding the *field* of rugby and its *habitus*.

### **Theme 3: Current rugby culture**

This theme is the first to discuss participants' current experience but will present links to the previous two themes. Current rugby culture relates to how the coaches perceived their place and role within the *field*. Culture, in the context of this study, can be taken to mean the *habitus*, the set of rules and dispositions within which they are coaching. Although participants were coaching at a variety of different levels, there were a number of common themes.

#### **Subtheme 1: Environment**

A certain set of criteria being present would appear to be crucial to the coaches' involvement in rugby as far as this study is concerned. This would reflect Bourdieu and Nice's (1980) assertion that *habitus* is '*durable and transposable*' (p53). Coaches are comfortable within a certain set of criteria and seek out situations and environments with which their own personal *habitus* overlaps (Appleroth and Edles 2010). As an example, one of the participants saw his next step as going back to coach in a certain environment where he could just work with players to make them better without the pressure of results. This is clearly the *habitus* he is most willing to coach within. In this study that overlapping space is the culture, ethos and dispositions within the rugby team they are involved with. There is, nonetheless, an area of debate regarding the extent to which the *habitus* has informed the choice initially to coach that team or the coach has informed the *habitus* of the team through his coaching philosophy (Bourdieu 1984; Lyle 1999). It would appear from the data that those coming into their first coaching role draw upon informal learning through past experiences which include, amongst other factors, the way they were coached themselves (Coombes and Ahmed 1974). In this sense there is a certain level of cultural reproduction

taking place (Putnam 2000). Conversely, more experienced coaches actively seek out a coaching environment they will feel comfortable in, preferring not to coach unless the *habitus* suits them. We may look to the literature dealing with early experience and volunteering to support the findings in this study (Perks 2007; Eccles and Barbour 1999; Youniss et al. 1997; Zaff et al. 2003). Whereas none of the studies listed above deal specifically with the notion of early experience linking to adult sports volunteering there is clear evidence here that a link can be drawn.

### **Subtheme 2: Making people better**

When asked about the main influencers in their own formative years, participants consistently remarked upon how they had taken an holistic approach to coaching, developing people rather than rugby players. When asked why they coached themselves this philosophy was mirrored - the development of the whole person was seen as one of the most important roles of a coach. This links to the earlier subtheme 'developing people' where the same phenomenon is discussed and supports the assertion made earlier that formative experiences impact upon later adulthood. It could, therefore, be argued that the reason coaches value this approach is that their own coaches valued this approach. As previously mentioned none of the group was coaching at a school as a teacher in contrast to their own coaches in their formative years. However, as Armour et al. (2005) suggest, there is a general move in the *field* of coaching towards taking account of social and cultural factors. This view is further supported by Busser and Carruthers (2010) who found that values and social factors were the most important functions for youth sport coaches. It is also possible here to draw some parallels with existing historical research (eg., Schafer 1974; Greendorfer and Lewko 1978) which drew links between scholastic sport and the adoption of a certain culture (*habitus*). In this case the *habitus* adopted is clearly more a traditional

‘teacher’ approach than a ‘coach’ approach (Jones 2007; Trottier and Robitaille 2014). Given the process of enculturation, it is unsurprising that ideals espoused by their own early coaches are given precedence in their approach to coaching. There is a clear link between the way coaches in this study were coached and the way they coach themselves. In addition, due to the increasing alignment between the *fields* of teaching and coaching (Jones 2007; Cassidy et al. 2015), it has become possible for community coaches to adopt an holistic approach to coaching which fits in to the *habitus* they are comfortable with.

### **Subtheme 3: Knowing rugby**

Previous themes have discussed the various ways participants have learned about the *habitus* and the overarching *fields* of either rugby or rugby coaching, however, the accumulation and acknowledgement of *capital* as far as coaching is concerned has not been fully examined. An understanding of the *habitus* is important to coaches coming into the game and as Kitchin and Howe (2016) suggest, those entering a *field*, in this case rugby coaching, are able to do so because they both understand it and are disposed towards it as a result of their own experience. This experience can be classed as *capital* and it is clear that coaches attribute certain levels of *capital* to both themselves and others within the *field*, thus creating a hierarchy (Jones et al. 2011). It is worthy of note that those coming into rugby coaching for the first time would also appear to have a hierarchy due to either their playing ability (Jones et al. 2011) or their knowledge of the club itself (Darcy et al. 2014). For example, one coach in this study referred to a colleague from his coaching group as far more qualified simply due to the level he had played the game at, the implication being that the other coach is placed further up the coaching hierarchy. In a similar way new coaches attributed high levels of *capital* to coaches who had played at the club. This attributed level of *capital* and understanding of the *habitus* allows coaches to confirm and enhance or



diminish their own place within the coaching hierarchy and *field* regardless of the professional qualification attained or suitability to coach. Although not explicitly mentioned in the data there are some parallels which can be drawn here to Whittaker and Holland – Smith (2016) in terms of the restrictive nature of *capital* within a voluntary sport setting and the potential for volunteers to be marginalised due to a lack of capital.

#### **Theme 4: Continued involvement in the game**

Bourdieu (1984) discusses the concept of social capital as the networks and connections a person has. In not stepping away from the game coaches are able to retain a level of *capital* within the competitive *field* of rugby overall. Applerouth and Edles (2011) suggest people tend to gravitate towards like-minded individuals so consequently many coaches are people who have previously played rugby and do not want to move away from the *field* they have become part of.

##### **Subtheme 1: Spending time with a son / investing into a son's life**

Researchers have found parents have a major role to play in the sport socialisation of their children (Edwardson and Gorely 2010; Beets et al. 2010). The findings of this study would appear to further evidence this from an amateur rugby perspective. Participants expressed the need to 'bond' with their son over a common interest in rugby and, although the initial interest may have been with the adult who first introduced the child to the game, the child quickly came to enjoy the game and they were able to have a shared understanding of what Bourdieu (1990) terms, a '*shared habitus*'. In the data collected here the adult has then become involved in the *field* of rugby coaching to continue to bond with his son through a shared *habitus*.

A clear link may be drawn here to the earlier subtheme 'parents are supportive and advocates of sport'. When the coaches were young their own parents were very supportive of sport and in many cases spent time with them as spectators or in informal rugby situations. This was replicated in the way they interacted with their own children with the resultant social reproduction, the transmission of *capital* via *habitus* that takes place (Bourdieu 1990). It is also possible, due to the fact that parents are now coaching their own children, that a link may be drawn between the *habitus* of coaches in their formative years and the participants of this study. There is, therefore, a combination of their parents' and coaches' *habitus* being passed on to their own sons as they perform both roles themselves. Formal recruitment into coaching could, therefore, be seen as almost irrelevant in this group as involvement was self-motivated and informed by a number of other factors including values, *capital* and *habitus*. This would seem to correlate with the conclusions drawn by Busser and Carruthers (2010) where parents of players were found to be more likely to be value driven and ex-players themselves. Nonetheless, it could be suggested that, due to the number of parent coaches within the amateur youth game, NGBs would gain by having a clear and obvious recruitment strategy for this group.

### **Subtheme 2: Aspiration to progress**

Scottish Rugby (2017) and Sports Coach UK (2013) both make reference to a need for coach development pathways in their coaching strategies. In both cases it is clear that a focus is placed upon formal and non-formal opportunities (Callery et al. 2011). However, participants in this study made little or no mention of either formal or non-formal opportunities when discussing their aspirations to develop. In contrast, coaches discuss informal learning as more important. It would appear that coaches do not necessarily equate further qualifications with progression. By using Bourdieu's notion that *capital*

allows individuals to compete for ascendancy within the *field* it is reasonable to assume that qualifications are not as valued within the *field* of rugby coaching as informal education. This is consistent with recent literature relating to formal coach education (Piggot 2012) where data suggests coaches see formal qualifications as more of a rubber stamp they are required to have rather than a valuable award. In light of the points made above it is possible to identify a further area of conflict between those governing sport and those involved in coaching sport (Taylor and Garrett 2010).

### **Subtheme 3: Giving something back**

The idea of a coaching responsibility was apparent in the data throughout this study. The literature suggests that there are two related areas linked to this. First, research around sport socialisation in early experience (Youniss et al. 1997; Zaff et al. 2003; Perks 2007) suggests early sporting experience can influence adult voluntary participation. In addition it is possible to look to the body of work pertaining to the transfer of culture (Bourdieu 1984; Putnam 2000). The coaches within this study were coached by volunteers and all volunteer themselves so the ideology of voluntarism, giving willingly of one's time to help others (Allison 2011), remains strong within amateur rugby in Scotland. Amateurism also appears to remain the fundamental ideology of the coaching group and is particularly strong within the group working with their own sons. There is a clear indication that they feel they are developing people rather than players and that the game is a context for learning (Gruneau 2006). Taking the two areas suggested here it is possible to say that for this group of coaches the ideologies of the coaches in their formative years have been replicated in their own approach.

Currently there is no indication that the ongoing process of enculturation and adoption of the principles of amateurism is one which NGBs support as sport has moved towards professionalism. Throughout the past 30 years the rise of professionalism and decline of amateurism has almost universally been seen as a positive move (Allison 2011). However, at the grassroots level, amateurism is still the dominant ideology. This inherent conflict is worth further consideration.

#### **Subtheme 4: Keeping people in the game**

One of the key principles of amateurism is to respect the game (Baker 2009). Furthermore, one of the key principles of the New Zealand rugby team, the most successful team in the world, is to pass on the game to the next generation, a surprisingly amateur goal given the professional nature of the team (Hodge, Henry and Smith 2014). This sense of amateurism and voluntarism is very strong with the participants and reflects the wider ideology of the amateur game. Within a sporting world that has adopted professionalism as the prevailing ideology (Lyle and Cushion 2010; Day and Carpenter 2015) it would seem counter intuitive to hear coaches talking so strongly about keeping people in the game for life so they themselves can volunteer back in the game or developing as individuals through the game. Amateurism seems to still be the dominant ideology (*habitus*) within the amateur game which brings into question the move of NGBs to a *habitus* commensurate with professionalism across the sport. The literature suggests that sports coaching as a *field* is messy with social and cultural factors informing practice as much as the technical and tactical side (Armour et al. 2005). Therefore, we can assume that there is potential for conflict between the NGB and coaches within the amateur game. There is currently very little within the coach development literature that discusses the *field* of rugby coaching and the *habitus* existing within it or the *habitus* of the coaches (Scottish Rugby 2017). Coaches

see longevity of involvement in the game and its ideals as a key function in their coaching so a love of involvement in the game is passed on but it is clear that within the formal and non-formal areas of coach development that this is not accounted for. The data further suggests that voluntarism within amateur rugby in Scotland is valued with the transfer of a volunteering *habitus* to current players being seen as part of the coaching role. This cyclical nature of social reproduction would appear to be critical in the recruitment and retention of volunteers within the grassroots game.

## **Practical implications**

There are several practical implications arising from the above discussion for coaches themselves, community clubs and NGBs. In particular there are implications in the areas of coach recruitment and coach development arising from this study.

### **Coach recruitment**

It is clear from the literature that there is a gap in the research relating to the recruitment of coaches. The findings of this study suggest that, for grassroots rugby coaches, an understanding of the *habitus* is crucial. From a recruitment perspective it would seem advisable for community clubs to develop strategies to identify individuals who are comfortable within the *habitus* at the club. As has been shown it is likely that these will be parents who have been exposed to a similar *habitus* in the past, either through the way they were coached or through their own parents.

From a NGB perspective this has wider implications. As has been shown, professionalism has become the dominant ideology in sports governance. It is, however, clear that amateurism remains the dominant ideology for coaches within the youth and grassroots sections of the

game. The issue, therefore, facing NGBs in terms of coach recruitment is to give appropriate guidance to clubs in terms of what the outcomes are for the grassroots game. From the point of view of professionalism grassroots sport should be about developing players to get better at the game. However, new coaches have, through a transfer of *habitus* from their own early experience, amateurism as their key ideology. NGBs need to understand this issue first and foremost as recruitment strategies which perpetrate amateurism would seem counter intuitive for NGBs given their prevailing ideology. To highlight the ambiguity currently present within coach recruitment we can look to Scottish Rugby (2017) which simply says coaches need the '*right skills, knowledge and attributes*' without an explanation of what these are.

A further area worth consideration is that of coach deployment. As has been shown coaches whose formative experiences developed certain levels of *capital* and were informed by a coaching *habitus* will actively seek out environments with like-minded individuals.

Therefore, clubs would benefit from understanding new coaches' backgrounds and motivations prior to deploying them. In short, those who experienced rugby in a similar informal setting to the current amateur game would appear to be more likely to want to become involved in coaching the game at the same level in adulthood.

### **Coach development**

From a practical perspective this study further informs the literature pertaining to coach development. More recent literature has indicated that coaching should take a more holistic approach to the development of the whole person and adopt a more traditional 'teacher' approach (Cassidy et al. 2015). In bringing coaching and teaching closer together it may then be possible to move further towards what Taylor and Garrett (2010) discuss as the

professionalization of sports coaching. To do this coach development strategies would be required to include the social and cultural factors acting upon the sport and individuals within it in the same way as a teacher would do with pupils in a school environment. This has consequences in the formal coach development arena which is currently dominated by a need to understand how to coach the game, rather than how to teach the player holistically (Scottish Rugby 2017).

Furthermore some consideration of the nature of the *habitus* for sports coaches may be worthwhile for both clubs and NGBs when looking to develop coaches. The concept of informal coach learning and development, where a coach learns as part of his or her exposure to experiences and the environment (Coombes and Ahmed 1974), may allow for coaches within clubs to work with more experienced coaches as part of an apprenticeship where the *habitus* is learned and *capital* is accumulated (Cushion et al. 2003). This allows new coaches to take responsibility themselves over time. This approach could also be mirrored by NGBs at more elite levels through similar mentoring arrangements although a redistribution of resources towards the informal learning end of the continuum may be required.

## Conclusion

The area of coach development is one in which a significant body of research has been carried out across a number of themes (Jones et al. 2011). A considerable evidence base exists which suggests informal learning is potentially the most valuable and most valued source of coach education (Gilbert and Trudel 1999; Cote et al. 2008; Lyle and Rhyne 2009). In addition, formative experience in sport is known to have an impact on future experience generally (Applerouth and Edles 2010) and specifically in adult voluntary participation (Perks 2007). However, there has been a lack of evidence in the literature to suggest formative experience has an impact on adult sports coaching. The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which formative experiences impact their subsequent coaching practice. In order to do this rugby coaches experiences were gathered as data through qualitative semi-structured interviews. Following data collection all interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis was undertaken using open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 2003) to present 4 major themes: strong role models in early experience; being brought up in a rugby environment; current rugby culture; and continued involvement in the game. These themes and their subthemes were subjected to analysis using the key concepts of habitus, capital and field as developed by Bourdieu (1984).

The main findings of the study revealed parallels between coaching approaches in participants' formative experience and the way they coach. In fact, the ideological approach was mirrored in that coaches saw their major function as developing individuals as people through the game which was the dominant coaching habitus in their formative years. It is also clear that the holistic approach to teaching and coaching taken in participants' early experience has been replicated in their own approach. Further to this, findings raise



concerns over the coach development structure presently in place for rugby in Scotland with most learning into what participants felt as their key function taking place informally. Findings also suggest that coaches select coaching environments they are most comfortable with. Those at the start of their coaching careers select clubs where they have a vested interest, either as an ex player or as a parent whilst more experienced coaches actively seek out a particular habitus. The accumulation of capital through formative experience was, therefore, found to be influential for coaches when it came to their own coaching. As a result, when this capital is applied to the field of coaching, individuals are able to place themselves higher or lower in the coaching hierarchy dependent upon the amount of capital they have accumulated. Contrary to NGB publications (Scottish Rugby 2017) there was little evidence that this hierarchy is influenced by formal coaching qualifications. Moreover, as the sporting and coaching landscape continues to move towards professionalism there would appear to be a conflict of ideologies between the grassroots coach and NGB coaching strategy.

There are, therefore, implications primarily for the NGB in terms of coach recruitment and education. These are centred on the need for the NGB understand the habitus and be clear in what is required of and expected from coaches at each level of the game. Coaches may then be able to be better directed to and deployed in the area they are most suited to. It is clear that coach suitability is an ad hoc process at the current point in time, therefore prospective research could be undertaken into the nature of the habitus and the competing ideologies at all levels of the game in Scotland.

## Limitations

It is important to understand and acknowledge the limitations in any study (Maxwell 2012).

In this study three limitations are worthy of note: sample size; amateur dominated sample group; and potential researcher bias.

There is potential that with a smaller sample size not enough data is collected to validate the findings. In total 10 participants provided data for this study through a semi-structured interview approach (Maxwell 2012). The research design did not initially identify a set number of participants as it was expected this would emerge as the data was collected and interpreted (Marshall 1996). This flexible approach meant relevant themes ceased to emerge at 7 participants although a further 3 participants were interviewed in line with accepted research paradigms (Bowen 2008). As Marshall (1996) points out, sample size is dictated by the extent to which the research question is answered. Therefore, in this case, and due to the rich nature of the data, a smaller sample size can be deemed sufficient.

The second limitation in the study was that of an amateur dominated sample group. This is unsurprising given that there are only 2 professional teams in Scotland (Scottish Rugby 2017). Effort was made in the recruitment stage of the study with several emails sent to Scottish Rugby asking for professional coaches to participate but this was unsuccessful. A snowballing method was used in the process (Marshall 1996) to allow the researcher the opportunity to access a more varied group and this may also have led to the group being fully amateur.

The last limitation is potential researcher bias. The author is involved in rugby coaching and also as a coach educator with Scottish Rugby. There is, therefore, general understanding of

the field which gave rise to the research purpose as a whole. However, there are potentially inherent beliefs and prejudices about the subject area which could bias the research. Nonetheless, there are also strengths in a knowledge of the subject area which, with the use of bracketing and peer review have allowed the author to more fully understand and interpret the data (Cresswell and Miller 2000). Furthermore, there are potential strengths in researcher bias through the adoption of a pragmatic approach. Finlay and Gough (2003) note that, as long as the researcher takes a reflexive stance, connections to the research topic and participants are welcomed and actually strengthen the research. A reflexive approach allows the researcher to both understand one's own social background, assumptions and opinions and how they could affect the choice of study, collection of data and findings. Far from being a problem it is argued that reflexivity can be seen as a valuable resource for researchers. With this in mind, and given the interest in the subject area and potential for further research, the author would potentially use a reflexive stance in the future. The use of a reflective log or journal as suggested by Etherington (2004) would enable the author to understand the change in method and content.

## Future research directions

A number of potentially interesting future directions for research arise from this study with three in particular being highlighted through the process.

One of the key findings of this research is the confirmation of the conflict that can arise between different stakeholders in sport (Taylor and Garrett 2010), in this case NGBs and grassroots clubs in ideological approaches. An area of further research, given the way in which a number of professional teams are being run, may be to examine the habitus present in professional sport in comparison to that at grassroots levels.

A further area of research indicated from this study is into the *capital and habitus* existing within the *field* of professional sport. Currently UKCC coaching pathways assume transition from introductory levels through to elite sport as experience and learning are accumulated. Bourdieu's concepts can be equally applied to the professional game and, as a result, it would be interesting to examine the coaching *field* in professional sport with regard to existing coaching pathways and the progression routes available to aspirational coaches.

There would also seem to be scope for future research into the area of transition in sport between grassroots and elite levels, and in particular within a sport with such historical amateur ideals as rugby, where coaches move from values driven coaching to an outcome based approach where winning becomes paramount. It may be valuable to conduct research into the way this may relate to long term athlete development models (Balyi et al. 2013), coaching aspiration, NGB expectation or a combination of factors.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Receipt of Ethics Acceptance**

Project Reference Number: SHS\_R\_2015-16\_14

Project Title: **An exploration into the formative experiences of sports coaches and their impact on the continued participation and progression in Rugby Union**

Proposer: **Alan Clark**

Matriculation number: [REDACTED]

Programme: MSc/MBA/MTech/LLM By Research (SHS), Stage 1

Supervisor: David Holland-Smith

The above Project has been granted Full ethical approval.

#### Standard Conditions:

- i The Proposer must remain in regular contact with the project supervisor.
- ii The Supervisor must see a copy of all materials and procedures prior to commencing data collection.
- iii If any substantive changes to the proposed project are made, a new ethical approval application must be submitted to the Committee. Completed forms should be resubmitted through the Research Ethics Blackboard course.
- iv Any changes to the agreed procedures must be negotiated with the project supervisor.

#### Additional Conditions:

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in ethical approval being revoked by the Ethics Committee.

**SHS Research Ethics Committee**

**07.12.15**

## **Appendix 2: Participant letter**

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am undertaking a Masters by Research (MRes) at Abertay University on the following subject:

**An exploration into the formative experiences of sports coaches and their impact on the continued participation and progression in Rugby Union.**

In order to collect data for my research I would like to conduct a number of interviews with coaches at all levels of Rugby in Scotland. Each interview will last approximately 40 minutes and will take the form of a semi-structured discussion. This means I will have a set of questions to help guide the discussion but it may not follow an order or format. Interviews would take place in a mutually agreeable informal setting at a suitable time.

Specifically, we would discuss your formative experiences to come to an understanding of why you got into coaching. This will focus on your background, where you grew up, who inspired you and what have been the key influences in your life as far as coaching Rugby is concerned.

All interviews completed in this research will be completely anonymous and information gathered will only be used for the purposes of the study. Although interviews will be recorded they will be deleted at the conclusion of the study. Furthermore, should you wish to withdraw from the study at any time you will be able to do so without giving any reason.

I have discussed this research with Neil Graham, Coach Education Manager at Scottish Rugby, who is extremely interested in my findings and supports the study. However, this is an independent piece of work which has not been funded or commissioned by Scottish Rugby.

Inclusion in this study is purely on a voluntary basis so should you wish to take part I would appreciate your contacting me at the address below.

Kind Regards,

Alan Clark

[Redacted Signature]

### Appendix 3: Informed Consent

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that the Abertay University, Dundee has approved all procedures.

- ☐ I have read and understood all information provided and this consent form.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.
- ☐ I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.
- ☐ I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.
- ☐ I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence.
- ☐ I agree to participate in this study.

Your name

---

Your signature

---

Signature of investigator

---

Date

---

## **Appendix 4: Interview Schedule**

### **Introduction**

Introduction to dictaphone, confirm the participant has seen all forms and are happy to begin interview.

### **Background**

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
2. Where / when did you grow up?
3. What kind of upbringing would you say you had?
4. To what extent did sport play a part of your life?
5. Tell me about your first experience of Rugby. When was the first time you were involved in the game? (Follow up question about practical experience if needed)
6. Can you qualify the experience you had? What was it like?
7. Were there any barriers?
8. Who or what would you say have been the biggest influences in your involvement in the game? (Probe for a number of influences if needed)
9. Why were those things / people such big influences?

### **Coaching (Some of these questions may already have been answered in section 1)**

10. Who do you currently coach and at what level?
11. At what point did you decide to get into Rugby coaching?
12. What was that experience like? (positives, barriers)
13. Why do you coach Rugby?
14. To what extent do you feel you are suited to the level you are currently coaching at?  
Why?
15. How long do you see yourself coaching for?
16. What does your involvement look like in the future?



## Appendix 5: Analysis Process

